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NSC BRIEFING 3 February 1955

MENDES-FRANCE'S SURVIVAL ODDS

I. Mendes-France's parlimentary position grows increasingly precarious:

A. Next hurdle--probable confidence vote during Assembly debate on N. Africa.

B. Debate started yesterday: confidence vote may come by Sat 5 Feb.

II. Mendes' odds probably shade better than 50-50.

A. Although key Radical Socialist faction (Rene Mayer) generally opposed to Mendes - nonetheless believed they will not vote against him on N. Africa because Mayer wants see Paris Accords safely through Council.

B. Mendes-France expected to announce to Assembly on 3 Feb that agreement has been reached in Tunisian negotiations. Should be boost for him.

Also general recognition in France that North African policy must be more IMAGINATIVE and REALISTIC than in past may help M-F against Colonial

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C. Government will try to get "package" confidence resolution, covering all N. Africa.

D. Opposition will try to force separate votes on Tunisia, Algeria and probably Morocco.

III. Embassy Paris speculates fall of Mendes would not necessarily jeopardize chances favorable Council action.

A. Might mean further delay, however. In event "cabinet crisis" of week or more, deadline for Council action (now 11 Mar 55) could legally be pushed back by same length of time it takes to form new government.

B. As sidelight, Gen. Ely in Saigon has expressed fear that, if Mendes falls, US-French agreement on training Vietnamese Army would be shelved indefinitely.

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IV. Schedule on Accords:

A. Council - start debate between 10 and 15 Feb, vote within next five days.

B. Bundestag - second, third readings 24 Feb, vote by 26th (Bundesrat action not expected until mid-March).

V. "Hurdles" following N. Africa debate:

A. Budget - This meeting strong attacks: various portions will be debated in next few weeks.

B. Tunisian Agreement - will probably be presented to Assembly in March.

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